

PHENOMENOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS
IN *REALISMO METAFÍSICO E IRREALIDAD*
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SUMMARY: In *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad*, Jesús Villagrasa analyzes the metaphysical contributions of Antonio Millán-Puelles in *Teoría del objeto puro* and develops a number of important points. Besides clarifying the notions of object, objectuality, and pure object, he elaborates the nature of the irreal (pure objects), the relationship between logic and ontology, and the legitimacy of using phenomenology in metaphysics.

KEY WORDS: Antonio Millán-Puelles, Jesús Villagrasa, phenomenology, metaphysics.

In his recent work *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad*, Jesús Villagrasa,¹ professor of metaphysics at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome, argues for the intrinsic compatibility between authentic phenomenology and legitimate metaphysics, studying the Spanish philosopher Antonio Millán-Puelles' longest and most important work: *Teoría del objeto puro*.² This compatibility between phenomenology and metaphysics is key to the theme of the irreal and is summed up in the introduction to *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad*: "In his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II has underlined the necessity of 'a philosophy of an authentically metaphysical reach'. The TOP, in its service to realist metaphysics, is able to realize 'the step from phenomenon to foundation', from the object to being... Phenomenology prepares

¹ J. VILLAGRASA, *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad. Estudio sobre la obra 'Teoría del objeto puro' de Antonio Millán-Puelles*, Fundación Universitaria Española, Madrid, 2008.

² A. MILLÁN-PUELLES, *Teoría del objeto puro*, Rialp, Madrid, 1990. *The Theory of the Pure Object*, Carl Winter Verlag, Heidelberg, 1996. From now on, the abbreviation 'TOP' will be used to refer to the work (Spanish version), as is done in the work of J. Villagrasa.

and favors an adequate development of metaphysical themes. A. Millán-Puelles has placed himself in this frontier area between phenomenology and metaphysics, in particular in his *Teoría del objeto puro*, a work that begins phenomenologically and concludes ontologically. In it, the analysis of the unreal poses metaphysical questions in such a way that it is not easy to give responses that are pre-fabricated or from a manual, without first having considered its validity ‘in the extreme case’ of the non-existent and without ‘going to the things themselves’.”³

Realismo metafísico e irrealidad: *structure and content*

Villagrasa’s work is divided into an introduction, seven chapters, and a conclusion. In Chapter One, *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad* presents the evolution, continuity and development of Millán-Puelles’ thought on the unreal and the notion of ‘pure object’. Chapter Two is dedicated to the latter’s criticisms of the idealistic systems of Kant, Husserl, Berkeley, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel (i.e. the immanence of the object in the Absolute) and his critique of the insufficient responses of Maritain, Husserl, Heidegger, and Hartmann to the principle of immanence.

In these chapters, Villagrasa argues that the method of the TOP is phenomenological-ontological. It is a phenomenological analysis of objectivity with respect to consciousness and of the determination of the subject by the object. It is ontological in that this phenomenological analysis is necessarily followed by a trans-phenomenological evaluation of that reference to consciousness in an ontological analysis of objectivity as a ‘relation of reason’. In other words, the determination of the subject by the object does not imply a real influence of the object as such on the subject. Thus, to maintain the tension between phenomenology and ontology, realism must deny the *reality* of non-existent objects, yet affirm that such objects are *something* with respect to consciousness. Metaphysics must treat the unreal - a logical something that is ontologically nothing - and overcome the illusion that every object of thought is real (*ens* in the strict sense). Phenomenology is the first step towards ontology, yet the tension be-

³ *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad*, pp. 12-3 (our translation). See JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et Ratio*, n. 83.

tween ‘*ontos*’ and ‘logic’ must be maintained in a realist metaphysics and this is one of the central and most developed arguments of Villagrasa’s work. Villagrasa’s argument is based on the relationship between logic and metaphysics in Aristotle and St. Thomas; for example, the distinction between what depends on the reality of a thing and what depends on our mode of considering it, permits us to attribute unreal consequents of our mode of conceiving them to the real things themselves (i.e. objectivity).

In Chapter Three, Villagrasa deals with the following principal affirmations of Millán-Puelles concerning the object and objectuality: (1) the object of knowledge is not really passive or active, (2) knowledge does not do anything real to the object, (3) objectuality⁴ is always unreal, and (4) the constitution of object and objectuality is merely gnoseological. J. Villagrasa also clarifies the distinction between the formal object of understanding and the formal object of metaphysics, a distinction that is necessary for defending realism against Maréchal and other transcendental Thomists.

In Chapter Four, Villagrasa clarifies that ‘pure object’ denotes objectuality and connotes non-existence, while ‘unreal’ designates non-existence and connotes objectuality. ‘Pure objectuality’ is the unreal objectuality of a pure object. Here he calls into question two “relatively marginal” affirmations of Millán-Puelles: (1) that in the unreal, objectuality can be something formally constitutive and being an object can be something more than extrinsic denomination, and (2) that the relation of the subject to the unreal object cannot be real. These assertions are corrected as follows: (1) the real and the unreal are univocally called ‘object’ by extrinsic denomination (even though Scholasticism limits the use of ‘object’ to the real, thus lacking an explanation of knowledge in general); (2) the subject always has a real relation to the object known (whether the latter is real or unreal). In defense of the latter affirmation, Villagrasa clarifies that knowledge is an exception to the Thomistic principle which states that ‘a real relation requires two real things.’ Knowledge’s recognition of things not established by it does not imply that every relation dependent on

⁴ The word ‘objectuality’ is used by Millán-Puelles instead of ‘objectivity’ in order to clarify that he is not speaking about an attitude of ‘objectivity’ but about the objectivity of the object itself (i.e. its ‘objectuality’).

understanding is irreal since the act of understanding is real and constitutes a real relation between subject and ‘*verbum*’; namely, that the subject knows the object formally. Therefore, whether the object is real or irreal, knowledge establishes a non-mutual relation, a real relation in the subject and an irreal relation in the object (the latter of which is identified with objectuality itself). Furthermore, the intelligibility of being and the objectuality of the object are different; the former is independent of its temporal being-known, while the latter is always irreal and consequent to the act of knowledge.

In Chapter Five, Villagrasa responds to J. Seifert’s objections to the TOP through an analysis of ‘ideal being’ in Husserl and Hartmann, as presented in Millán Puelles’ doctoral thesis. Seifert says that there are no mere mental constructions and that the trans-objectual character of ideal entities (e.g. objects of logic, necessary essences, mathematical beings and values) cannot be excluded from the real. On the contrary, although ideal being is an objective concept that can enjoy objectuality, normativity and a real foundation, none of these can give it the trans-objectuality of the real since the form of ideal being is universal. The lack of trans-objectual value in ideal being does not exclude its universal normativity because ‘being-true’ is not convertible with ‘true-being’. The former only needs to be a concept founded in reality. This insight allows Villagrasa to proceed to an analysis and description of existence as trans-objectuality (that is, subsistence outside of thought), thereby contributing to the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition and providing both a negative and relative formulation of the truth that reality is not limited to the ‘being-object-of’ consciousness even though both existence and objectuality are extra-quidditative values.

Chapter Six of *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad* summarizes Part Two of the TOP. Villagrasa develops a ‘taxonomy’ of the irreal through an analysis of the forms of the pure object. This taxonomy says that the irreal includes two extra-quidditative aspects, namely non-existence and objectuality, and differs from the ‘modal’ position of Scholasticism.

Chapter Seven summarizes Part Three of the TOP and develops an ‘etiology’ of the irreal through an investigation of the causes of the pure object. By treating the material, formal, efficient, and final origins of the various forms of the pure object, Villagrasa offers strong arguments in favor of metaphysical realism, in addition to drawing out the detailed logical distinctions with respect to the causalities of the irreal. His taxonomy justifies the distinction of the irreal into sensible (divided according to external and internal senses) and intelligible (divided into the unrealizable object, or ‘being of reason’, and possible object, or the factually inexistent). His etiology concerns the material and formal constituents of these forms before treating the genesis (or efficient cause) of each form and the final causality of the irreal (or pure object).

In the Conclusion, J. Villagrasa brings together the TOP’s abundant contributions to metaphysical realism and reaffirms the service that the phenomenological-ontological analysis of Millán-Puelles gives to metaphysics as an elucidation of the ‘irreal.’ The conclusion ends in the same way as the TOP, by affirming its role even in moral praxis. In fact, Millán-Puelles concludes his phenomenological-metaphysical analysis by the quasi-ethical affirmation that since, in praxis, there is ‘intentioned’ irreal final causality, deliberation about the means necessary for praxis, and pure objectuality as constitutive of the precepts by which praxis is governed, ‘irreality’ is the means through which every use of freedom determines the reality of our being. Similar thoughts are also found in Chapters Two and Seven of Villagrasa’s work. Thus, the universal import of the TOP is clarified in the following paraphrased thought of the TOP⁵ regarding the impact of metaphysics even on practical philosophy: “For realist metaphysics, the TOP is necessary, because without an elucidation of the irreal there is no true realism and because the irreal is an indispensable category for understanding the reality of the human being – which metaphysics does–, his freedom and his way of acting. Man is a reality before which are given irreals; moreover, he is a reality that provokes irreals. Without rousing them up, man’s use of freedom cannot be comprehended.”⁶

⁵ See pp. 614-616, 832.

⁶ *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad*, p. 115 (our translation).

Key contributions of Realismo metafísico e irrealidad

With the general structure of *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad* in mind, I propose looking more in depth at some of the key contributions of Villagrasa's work: the relationship between 'pure object' and 'being of reason'; the notion of 'pure object' in relation to reality and irreality; the notion of objectuality; phenomenology and the tension between logic and ontology; the relation and difference between object and *verbum*; the relation between object and *ratio entis*; and, finally, the relativity implicit in 'object.' Before concluding, we will address a Thomistic objection to the TOP, further clarifying how Villagrasa exposes the mutual relation between phenomenology and metaphysics in treatment of the irreal.

1. *The relationship between 'pure object' and 'being of reason'.* Underlying Millán-Puelles' evaluation of the various idealist theories of the 'principle of immanence' is the observation that many modern currents of philosophy reduce being to object (i.e. metaphysics to epistemology). The passage from phenomena to foundation requires an analysis of the theory of the pure object and therefore of 'irreality' (the irreal) in contra-position to the reality of being itself. According to Millán-Puelles, St. Thomas⁷ mistakenly limits 'being of reason' to negation and relation. In this case, a sculpture that is merely projected mentally would either be nothing at all or existent in the nature of the thing. However, it is neither, and thus both are inadequate options. Since the sculpture has potency to really exist, some would say it has 'trans-objectuality', and is neither a 'being of reason' nor a real being (if we grant the terminology of Thomas). The fact is that it is only a pure object. Thus, we see that every 'being of reason' is a pure object and that 'pure object' has a greater extension than that of 'being of reason', since the latter is limited by St. Thomas to relation or negation. A dinosaur, for example, is not a relation, a negation, or an existent being; it is, rather, a pure object, and has the potency to exist since, at one time, it did exist even though now it does not exercise existence. There is yet another type of 'being of reason' (often denied by Thomists), namely paradoxical quiddities; for example, we can conceive a square circle simply by conceiving a square and a circle at the same time, even if this cannot be imagined by virtue of

⁷ See *De Veritate*, q. 21, a. 1.

its contradictory nature. As well as expounding the logic of Millán-Puelles' principal affirmations, Villagrassa relates them to those systems considered by Millán-Puelles (including those of St. Thomas, John of St. Thomas, and Suárez) and also considers other possible contributions. He uses Aristotelian-Thomistic realism to clarify the concepts of 'object', 'being of reason', 'relation', and 'extrinsic denomination', making his own contributions (e.g. his response to Josef Seifert's objections by means of a phenomenological analysis of ideal being) without introducing different terminology, which would only confuse rather than clarify the situation (as some of the commentators of St. Thomas may have done with the latter's works).

Now, according to the TOP, the fact that we experience the difference between a pure object and a real object is the immediate expression of reality in the subject, but this logical relation also indicates that real being is not constituted by an ideal part and an existential part since the irreal cannot have potency for reality and the being-thought of reality cannot be a 'being of reason' (negation or relation). While Seifert and others think that Millán-Puelles denies the legitimacy of the concept of 'being of reason' by reducing everything to either real or logical being, Villagrassa points out that Millán-Puelles merely denies the *reality* of 'being of reason' (refusing to treat 'possibles' and 'actuals' on equal footing) such that something is either a true-being or a being-true since the distinction between mere object and reality is absolute and irreducible.⁸ Such arguments reaffirm the importance of the phenomenological method in Millán-Puelles, and address the concern of those who hold that such a method is not advantageous to metaphysics. In other words, the phenomenology of Millán-Puelles does not lead to the transcendental idealism of Husserl, despite those who renounce beginning with subject-object opposition.

2. *'Pure object', reality and irreality.* According to J. Villagrassa, the key to reading Millán-Puelles is found in recognizing that his starting point is the concept 'pure object' and that his goal is that of clarifying the realistic metaphysical concepts of being and non-being, which have been recognized by recent analytical philosophy as a le-

⁸ Hence, 'truth-being' is said to be an ambiguous term.

gitimate replacement of Scholastic modal ontology. As opposed to the mutual reciprocity between the act of knowledge and the object in idealism, irreality (the pure object) does not point to the real, nor does the real point to the irreal (and the relation therein). In this way, Millán-Puelles seeks to refute representationism and materialistic realism by proposing the irreducible opposition between irreal object-being and reality itself. To detect the irreality of the purely objectual, one must first recognize reality as an exception to irreality. When an existent thing is known, its being-known is not a pure object but a merely extrinsic denomination, whereas in every other case, a being-object is formally constituted by its irreality. The method used here is Aristotelian-Thomistic insofar as it first treats the subject itself, then its properties and accidents, and finally, its intrinsic and extrinsic causes (i.e. the natural progress from phenomenological logic towards onto-logic). In other words, Millán-Puelles proceeds from description of the self-evidence of the object towards a metaphysical analysis and etiology of the irreal. Phenomenological analysis is used to clarify the notion of object and manifest the erroneous nature of the idealist ‘principle of immanence’; the metaphysical approach is used to define the nature of a ‘pure object’ according to the ontological answer to the question ‘*an sit.*’ The latter is the metaphysical translation of the phenomenological conclusion, which is a nominal-descriptive definition. This metaphysics consists in the exercise of the conceptual dialectic of extra-quidditative opposite values (namely, inexistent and existent as ontological terms), which requires a distinction between quidditative and extra-quidditative as that between being-known (objectuality) and existence (the formal effect of ‘*esse*’). This distinction, it should be noted, does not correspond exactly to that between essence and existence.

3. *Objectuality.* The doctoral dissertation of Millán-Puelles on ideal being in Husserl and Hartmann shows that Husserl’s phenomenology is metaphysically neutral, yet can be used by realists as a means of the description that is necessary before metaphysics. On the contrary, idealists limit their use of phenomenology to the ‘*epoché*’ (‘bracketing’) method, since, according to them, metaphysics is seen from the beginning as unnecessary or indeterminate

(i.e. impossible to justify without presuppositions). Villagrasa holds that the central affirmation reached through Millán-Puelles' phenomenology of metaphysical knowledge is that if realism holds the possibility of objectuality for the reality known (unlike the idealist reduction of reality to states of consciousness), the irreal must be purely objectual when known and the objectuality of the real (that is, the actually existent) must be both irreal and true (i.e. the objectual does not have real potency). The only condition for authentic realism is absolute opposition to idealism of all kinds (e.g. Kant, Berkeley, Husserl, Hegel, Fichte, Plato, etc.). Therefore, the TOP presupposes affirmation of the existence of the unconditional and absolute knowability of the real, arguing that the pure object is conditioned by consciousness (contrary to Kant) and that, even though the objectuality of the known world is relative to my 'I', to see the world as an object of thought is not the only way to consider it (contrary to Husserl). In fact, Husserl's phenomenology is limited since it does not question the metaphysical and gnoseological implications of its predetermined method (*'epoche'*) and its attempt to begin without any ontological commitments.

Since phenomenology is metaphysically neutral, it can be a fitting instrument for analysis of real and irreal objects insofar as the objectuality of both is irreal and yet affects the reality that we are and experience. Every objectuality is irreal, but the objectuality of the irreal (non-existent) is doubly irreal ('pure object', in the strict sense), and yet the objectuality (to-be-object) of the real and the irreal is also a 'pure object.' The irreal has to be 'something' since it is an object of knowledge, but this 'something' is a 'pure object.' The TOP is necessary for metaphysics because true realism requires treatment of the irreal.⁹ As well, it is also indispensable to understand human freedom insofar as irrealities arise from reality. Now, phenomenology does not exclude metaphysics and actually leads to it because it deals with the 'givens' of objectuality in reference to consciousness and the determination of the subject by the object, and it supposes the doctrine of ideal being and relation.¹⁰ The TOP

⁹ In support of this necessity, he cites Suarez' request for a treatment of ideal being in the beginning of the *Metaphysical Disputations*, which Suarez excludes from proper metaphysics and therefore does not treat.

¹⁰ See Ch.4 of *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad*.

takes an ontological approach to conclude that objectuality is a mere 'relation of reason' and that the influence of the object on the subject need not be 'real.'

4. *Phenomenology and the tension between logic¹¹ and ontology.* Universal being is the object of both logic and ontology, although in different ways, and so a phenomenology of objectuality can link the two in the ground of experience. Transcending and preserving the 'givens' of phenomenology requires mutual transitions between logic and ontology for the following reasons: (1) not every object of knowledge is being, (2) every object is considered by the intellect with respect to being, (3) the notion 'object' is phenomenological while the notion 'pure object' is ontological, and (4) metaphysics must consider the unreal as opposed to the real, which is its primary object.

Realism must maintain the tension between logic and ontology, and phenomenology alone can raise and maintain such tension. This tension consists, simultaneously, in the ontological negation that inexistent objects are real essences and the logical affirmation that these are something with respect to consciousness. True realism must consider consciousness insofar as it makes both the real and the unreal intentionally present, and it is this very consciousness that maintains the necessary onto-logical tension. This is evident in the definition of pure object as 'inexistent object' ('inexistent' corresponds to ontology, 'object' to logic). Neither the unreal nor consciousness is understood fully without the demands of both perspectives - phenomenology and metaphysics - because the unreal is ontologically nothing yet logically something and consciousness cannot be understood without the unreal. Metaphysics must treat the relations between being and being-known in order to avoid a merely notional dialectic. This onto-logical tension/dialectic cannot be recognized without an attentive analysis of spiritual activity (or consciousness) precisely because it is not merely notional or phenomenological. The step from phenomenology to ontology is important because

¹¹ 'Logic' is here used in the loose sense of 'gnoseology', not in reference to the logic whose object is 'second intentions.'

although they mutually enlighten each other, they do not pertain to the same level (i.e. *ratio obiecti* vs. *ratio entis*).¹²

St. Thomas, Villagrasa notes, implicitly recognizes this phenomenological-ontology tension by affirming the following: (1) one can apply the principles of logic to the object of metaphysics in dialectics even though the two are distinct, (2) logical dialectics is a fitting point of departure for metaphysics, (3) logic serves realism by clarifying that to argue truthfully requires a distinction between the way of arguing and the content of the argument, (4) logical predications are not false if they only apply to things as understood and not in themselves, and (5) the distinction between what depends on the being of a thing and what depends on our mode of considering it allows one to attribute to real things irrealities that are consequent to our mode of knowing them (e.g. objectuality), and the human capacity to distinguish between the modes of being, knowing, and predicating permits the development of a realist metaphysics.

5. *Object and 'verbum'*. The relationship between logic and ontology is further evidenced in the relationship between object and '*verbum*.' Villagrasa argues that in the TOP, the object is the intentional term of consciousness in act, not merely the '*verbum*' that represents it formally, and this corresponds to John of St. Thomas' 'motive-principle object of a passive potency'; in the loose sense, it also corresponds to his 'terminative object of active potency.' '*Verbum*' becomes 'object' when it is the object of further consideration (reflection), which is 'pure object'; 'object', strictly speaking, is not the product of intellectual activity (as is 'pure object'). Only phenomenological reflection makes the subject fully present to consciousness as an object. Thus, there is an indissoluble connection between the explicit presence of the 'intentioned' (the object) and the active subject that intentions it (i.e. the self-evidence of the object and the quasi-self-evidence of the subject in phenomenological reflection). Although objectuality does not guarantee reality, the object is presented to the subject as independently objectual in itself. What

¹²Hence, the relationship between the two is better termed 'analytical' than 'dialectical.' See J. VILLAGRASA, "El análisis fenomenológico-ontológico: método de *Teoría del objeto puro*", in *Alpha Omega* 6 (2003), 361-91; and "La analéctica como método de una metafísica realista en A. Millán-Puelles", in *Alpha Omega* 7 (2004), 17-46.

is explicitly present in knowledge is the object (even though this may be unreal), while the subject and the act of knowledge (and the '*verbum*') are not any more explicitly present than they are in reflexive intention (even though they are real).

The object as such (whether real or unreal) is not really passive or active due to the nature of knowledge as an intentional union, and the unreality of objectuality is the principal condition for the possession of a pure object. The intellect naturally conceives every object as if it were a reality, but the object ('unreality') would not be distinguished from reality if objectuality were something real in the object as such.¹³ Now, the word 'constitution' with respect to an object can be used in the gnoseological sense, and even St. Thomas uses it in an ontological sense with respect to '*verbum*.'¹⁴ Still, he distinguishes two types of object: '*res ipsa*' ('*a quo accipitur species*'), which is 'object' in TOP, and '*verbum*' ('*ad quod terminatur actio intellectus*'). The following is observed in St. Thomas: (1) object is not identified with '*verbum*' or '*res extra*', (2) '*res extra*' is reached in '*verbum*' through formal mediation, (3) immanent generative action ends in '*verbum*' (not '*res*'), (4) the nature of '*verbum*' represents the thing understood, (5) '*res*' has priority '*a quo*' with respect to representation, (6) '*verbum*' has priority '*in quo*' with respect to the understanding of the object, and (7) '*verbum*' is the object as the representative form of the thing understood and '*res*' is the object represented (i.e. the latter is the object, strictly speaking, in the TOP).¹⁵ From John of St. Thomas, the TOP affirms the following about the object: (1) something is called object by extrinsic denomination (that is, by the application of the unreality of the denominated form to something real), (2) the univocal nature of '*ratio obiecti*' allows for a treatment of 'being of reason' and real being together (i.e. in the TOP, the notion of object permits formal ontological and phenomenological analysis of the real and unreal object for the sake of a metaphysics of being as such in opposition to the unreal), and (3) the distinction between objective and formal modes of representation transcends the representationist interpretation of *De Potentia*, q. 9, a. 5 (namely,

¹³ Therefore, John of St. Thomas errs when he considers object as 'representable', as if it had reality as a possible.

¹⁴ See *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 9 ad 6; *De Potentia*, q. 8, a. 1.

¹⁵ See *De natura verbi intellectus*, ch. 2; *De Veritate*, q. 4, a. 5; I, q. 34, a. 1; *De Potentia*, q. 9, a. 5; I-II, q. 93, a. 1 ad 2.

that the representation of the object is made through a formal sign that does not objectively mediate knowledge).¹⁶

6. *Object and ratio entis*. In addition to Millán-Puelles' analysis of object and objectuality, Villagrasa considers the distinction between the object of logic (and phenomenology) and that of metaphysics so as to avoid confusing the act of understanding and the act of being. Now, the object of understanding is 'ens' as a 'ratio', but the object of metaphysics is 'ens' as a transcendental; the transcendental Thomists presuppose the identity of the two. Merely phenomenological analysis would not adequately distinguish between 'ratio obiecti' (a universal category including 'ens rationis' and 'ens naturae', i.e. phenomeno-logic) and 'ratio entis' (corresponding to onto-logic), while merely ontological analysis would not place in opposition 'ratio entis' and 'ratio obiecti', thereby reducing 'ens' either to object or 'ratio formalis obiecti' (the formal object of understanding). Yet, 'ratio entis' (and ontology) precedes 'ratio obiecti' (and phenomenology) as the first act of understanding (apprehension) precedes the second (judgment), but this is a precedence of nature rather than of time/process.

7. *The relativity implicit in 'object'*.¹⁷ Since the 'ratio entis' of simple apprehension extends even to irreal objects, according to Millán-Puelles, it is possible to conceive objects that are contradictory in reality. Paradoxical beings of reason are those impossible/contradictory objects that do not possess being or truth because they are 'irrealities' (irreal) but can be included in acts of judgment since we can mentally combine objects which cannot exist in reality since they are formed by incompatible characteristics (e.g. square circle). 'Inexistent object' is a quasi-real definition of object because inexistence is the 'ratio essendi' of a pure object as pure, but the 'ratio essendi' of a pure object as object is the effective existence of the act of consciousness that 'intention' it. Notice that 'object' is the genus while 'inexistent' must be the quasi-specific difference. Still, although 'object' seems to be like a transcendental because everything (and even nothingness) can be objectified, it should not be identified as such

¹⁶ See *Ars Logica*, 9b 30-37, 707b 5-12.

¹⁷ In order to understand the precise difference between pure object and relation, see pp. 262-266 of *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad*.

because it is included in the category of 'relation' as an extrinsic denomination (and extrinsic denomination cannot formally be a transcendental). As well, object is not identical to transcendental truth because intelligible being as such is not always understood in act by human consciousness. Intelligibility is intrinsic to being as a necessary property, while being an object pertains to a being only by extrinsic denomination. Object is a genus in the category of relation because it is constituted by an irreal relation to the subject (that is, it is in co-relative relation to the relation of the subject to the object).

Now, Villagrasa argues against Millán-Puelles' assertion that extrinsic denomination is a constitutive note of the irreal object and yet not even an accident of the real object. According to Villagrasa, metaphysical realism demands that knowledge of both real and irreal objects possess the same characteristics since the object univocally includes both the real and irreal. In addition, contrary to Millán-Puelles, both irreal and real objects must present a real relation to the object in the subject of knowledge since the objectuality of every object is equally irreal/pure. The objectuality of the irreal cannot be 'something more' than that of the real, due to the univocal nature of extrinsic denomination. Even though the object as such does not act on the subject, the representative activity of consciousness is directed even towards the irreal. Furthermore, contrary to some phenomenologists (such as Hartmann), knowledge must be an operation rather than a relation because its relative character does not identify it with relation itself. Similarly, objectuality cannot be an accident since it is irreal; it is a 'relation of reason' constituted in direct intention and has extra-quidditative value (as existence does). There is no (phenomenological) reason to distinguish between knowledge's relation to real and irreal objects, but the real has two extra-quidditative values while the irreal only possesses one. Villagrasa, therefore, states that objectuality is constitutive of the object as such, just as 'esse' is the formal effect of the act of creation. Although the analogy of being for the real and the irreal is metaphorical, '*ratio obiecti*' is univocal for the real and the irreal since both, as objects, are simply objectual.

Even though, ordinarily, there cannot be a real relation between something real and something unreal (according to St. Thomas), in the case of the act of knowledge, the relation of the knowing subject to a pure object could be real because the being of relation depends principally on the subject-foundation and the foundation is the cause of the relation, while the ‘terminus’ is merely the condition. On the plane of the subject and his act (rather than that of existence), the ‘terminus’ exercises the function of an indispensable positive condition insofar as it exercises a certain extrinsic formal causality (not exemplar causality), and so the production of the being of a relation is reserved to its foundation. Since there is a transcendental relation (or constitutive reference) between intellect and its formal object, which is specificative,¹⁸ and there is a real relation between intellect and ‘*verbum*’ (formally a medium), it is not fitting to reduce the relation of the subject to real or unreal objects to the same type of relation that exists between two unreal ‘termini’ (namely, ‘relation of reason’) since the object is the subject’s own object. In the case of *creatio ex nihilo*, God has a ‘relation of reason’ to the creature while the creature has a real relation to the Creator. This is because ‘relation of reason’ indicates only a reference to something and does not add anything to the subject. Such a ‘relation of reason’ is also valid for the object of knowledge with respect to the subject. The difference is that since real relation is always present in what depends on the opposite extreme, the creature possesses ontological dependence on the Creator, while the subject possesses gnoseological dependence on the object (i.e. there is a limited analogy between creation and knowledge – the latter is the inverse of the former from the gnoseological perspective). Both relations between intellect and ‘*verbum*’ are real because the latter is generated by the former and is the thing actually understood as it is present in the subject.

Furthermore, according to Villagrasa, truth itself is not ‘*relatio*’, even though its ‘*ratio*’ includes intelligibility, which indicates relation to an intellect. Objectuality (the relation of the object to the subject) is not the intelligibility of being but the actual being-known of the object. ‘*Ens*’ in itself does not indicate ‘*relatio*’ because intelligibility is a perfection of ‘*ens*’ that is founded in ‘*esse*’ with respect to spiri-

¹⁸18 ‘Particular object’ is a term of predicamental relation. Villagrasa notes that the term ‘transcendental relation’, as used by John of St. Thomas, is a confusing term.

tual subjects (i.e. the supposition of creation). The irreal object only has intentional ‘*esse*’ in relation to the ‘*verbum*’ of the object. Now, both Husserl and Hartmann confuse the real and the irreal since the former reduces phenomenology to ontological neutrality and the latter tries to transcend this idealism by giving ‘supra-objectivity’ to ideal beings (insofar as they have ‘truth-being’). In response to this, the TOP proposes to replace the essence-*esse* duality (which belongs to the entitative order) as the most fundamental duality with that which follows the logical-ontological tension, namely being-known/objectuality and existence as the formal effect of ‘*esse*’ (trans-objectuality). ‘To exist’ is defined as ‘to subsist outside of consciousness’ rather than ‘to subsist outside nothingness and causes’ (as the Scholastics say). Existence is only the formal effect (not the efficient effect) of ‘*actus essendi*’ (*esse*), and ‘*esse ut actus*’ is not constitutive of the essence because existential actuality is not a state of ‘*ens*’, as is objectual actuality (i.e. the concept/reality of creation). Therefore, metaphysical realism must hold the following: (1) to exist, it is not necessary to be an object, (2) to be an object, it is not necessary to exist, and (3) the object-being of the real and the irreal depends on conscious subjectivity in act; therefore, realism is compatible with the unconscious production of the irreal.

8. *A reply to an objection to the TOP.* Some object to the affirmation that “to be an object, it is not necessary to exist”, by citing Thomas’ doctrine that there is an analogy of proportionality between the ‘*esse*’ of the ‘*verbum mentis*’ and that of the thing in itself that is understood; hence, ‘paradoxical quiddities’ do not exist, and every object must have at least the potential to exist. This seems to follow from the consideration of ‘*verbum mentis*’ as the synthesis of the act of understanding and the thing understood and ‘*ens*’ as the synthesis of essence and ‘*esse*’. Thus, the analogy holds that the act of understanding is to the ‘*quidditas*’ understood as ‘*esse*’ is to the ‘*quidditas*’ in reality.¹⁹ According to this line of thought, the TOP would fall into the error of saying thought is indifferent to reality, forgetting the primacy of ‘*ens*’ in the mind and yielding to the classical dualism between representation and existent. In other words, the TOP seems to separate ‘*quidditas*’ from existence excessively and opt for the

¹⁹ See SCG, I, ch. 45; *De Veritate*, q. 9, a. 6.

more traditional Dominican interpretation of the real distinction, giving essence a quasi-autonomous intelligibility rather than recognizing it as the limit of 'esse', the act of all acts in every *ens*. Hence, it would seem that the TOP separates the thing understood from the thing in reality.

Our response to this objection, based on the text of Villagrasa regarding paradoxical quiddities, is that since we must think both '*ens*' and '*non-ens*' at the same time in the first principle of non-contradiction, we can think of contradictories together without affirming contradictory statements (i.e. the discovery of 'paradoxical quiddities'). Another example of a paradoxical quiddity is precisely the concept 'inconceivable' since such an idea itself must be conceived in order for it to be possible to use it in a judgment. Secondly, essence cannot be purely a limitation of 'esse' because the distinction between one essence and another cannot be provided by 'esse' alone (what is common to all beings), and only prime matter is pure indetermination. Therefore, essence must have some notional intelligibility when considered in itself, even though it receives its actual intelligibility when it is created in the creation of finite 'esse'. In other words, essence is the *intelligible* limit of 'esse' and such intelligibility is eminently contained in its created 'esse', from which it receives such intelligibility in act. Now, the quiddity of a thing understood is identical to that in reality with respect to its content (that is, as quiddity), but insofar as it is being-thought (i.e. its object-being), it is radically opposed to existent, real being. Hence, even '*non-ens*' has a certain quiddity in human consciousness (object-being). It alone can be thought without an intentional 'esse' that is proportionate to its real 'esse' since it has no real 'esse'. But the intentional 'esse' of '*non-ens*' is the same as that of every other thought insofar every thought as such is opposed to reality precisely as being-thought. '*Non-ens*' (i.e. paradoxical quiddities) is precisely that which is merely thought-being (i.e. pure object), that is, doubly unreal and the only thought *in itself* indifferent to reality and yet experienced phenomenologically in its effects. Therefore, the TOP does not excessively separate '*quidditas*' and existence because the intentional 'esse' of the '*verbum mentis*' is identical to the extra-quidditative value of objectuality, while existence is defined as trans-objectuality (the only other extra-

quidditative value). The quiddity remains the intelligible limit of ‘*esse*’ in reality, but when it is an object of consciousness, its act is the extra-quidditative ‘being’ of irreality. This mutual opposition between object and reality is obviously an aid rather than a hindrance to metaphysical realism.²⁰

In other words, the analogy made in the objection is forced because what does not exist can not have potency. The analogy of being between the real and the unreal cannot be intrinsic. There can only be an analogy of proportionality with respect to the ‘*verbum mentis*’, which is not the object in the act of reflection. The expression ‘quiddity’ is used in order to reserve the term ‘essence’ for the existent because what does not exist (whether it never existed or cannot exist or existed and does not exist any more) does not have essence; but if we understand it, we must capture a ‘*quid*’, which is (in this case) the quiddity of a pure object. The ‘*verbum mentis*’ is always real when there is an act of knowledge, but its reality does not make the object known to be real in the formation of the ‘*verbum mentis*’.²¹

9. *Conclusion.* Although the core of Thomistic metaphysics concerns the resolution of *ens qua ens* into ‘*esse ut actus*’, Villagrasa’s work evidences the significant role of the theory of the pure object in metaphysics as an ‘*onto-logic*’, the ‘*modus logicus*’ and the passage from a phenomenological starting point to metaphysics. It is true that being as such is the object of metaphysics and its existential opposition to the pure object of consciousness may not constitute the center of the “divine science”, but as Aristotle notes, a science must treat the contrary of its object in order to understand the nature of its object. ‘*Ens*’ and ‘*esse*’ cannot be fully understood without an analysis of the unreal. Logical discourse on the meaning of the real in its opposition to the unreal can function as an important foundation for the philosophy of being. Despite possible shortcomings with respect to the theme of critical realism, the phenomenological Aristotelianism of Millán-Puelles greater clarifies the transition from logic to ontology. In our opinion, Maritain’s doctrine of the ‘intellectu-

²⁰ See also *Realismo Metafisico e irrealidad*, p. 152, second paragraph, and its corresponding footnote, n. 131, which cites *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 8, ad 12.

²¹ See *Realismo Metafisico e irrealidad*, 51, n. 121.

al intuition of existential being' would be helpful not only to justify the legitimacy of knowledge but also to further legitimize the phenomenological approach as a bridge to the existential personalism of Karol Wojtyła. Finally, while the ethical implications that Millán-Puelles draws from his TOP may be exaggerated, Villagrasa's profound and lucid analysis of its contributions are not only metaphysically valid and valuable for any detailed doctrine of realism, but it also constitutes indispensable reading for any metaphysician or phenomenologist, or anyone interested in defending realism at its very foundations. Without absolutizing the contributions of TOP, the great accomplishment of Jesús Villagrasa in *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad* is the establishment of the firm and intimate relationship that must exist between authentic phenomenology and Thomistic realism.

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